

# The Role of Faith in Healthcare

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Most of us have faced various health related issues in our lives. Some individuals have experienced more serious complications than others. Most medical doctors have prescribed various forms of medicines to help improve the health of one's life. Some forms of medications have appeared to be less effective. However, many people have resorted to churches for healing. According to Evans (1999) many churches have begun to incorporate spiritual healing or prayer to assist people from a holistic perspective.

Our society has become more litigious. Malpractice cases and lawsuits in healthcare have increased over the course of several years. As a result of the cases and lawsuits, many doctors have refrained from treating people from a broad spectrum. The author suggests that a healing church is paramount for pastors and other healthcare professionals to assist members of a church or within their communities with their illnesses or ailments.

Many members or people within a church setting or community will seek prayer during church service or request prayer while they are in the hospital or at their homes. The author states that the health ministry is a newly developed approach. According to the author Evans (1999) there are various professional approaches that are used to help assist peoples such as the medical model.

The medical model is used to treat diseases or illnesses with medicines or from a pharmaceutical approach. Some medications work for some people, while it is not effective for others and can have some drastic side effects. Some medical doctors may fear that people will not come into the doctor's office for routine visits as a result of the health ministry.

Some doctors do not incorporate spirituality or religion in the treatment or care to heal people. The author suggests that there are other professionals such as the social workers, who may feel that the health ministry may be doing their jobs when pastors or evangelists are looking for resources for people within the community. The author states that churches have been involved with healing people for many years even before the development of many professions.

The greatest treatment and healing in the world is to be washed in the Blood of the Lamb. The blood washing power of God can conquer any sin, sickness, exorcism, or other problems that many people may be suffering with. Churches should become more active in faith and prayers to help assist in the healing process of many people who believe in faith and the power of prayer for healing purposes.

Many people have lost confidence in churches as a result of sexual misconduct and scandals in churches. Many people have doubted churches and do not want to participate in a healing ministry because of various forms of abuse that have ultimately taken place in some churches. There are issues of abuse and mistakes made across the entire nation in any setting.

We must work together in a collective effort to bring a halt or prevent any type of misconduct in life, regardless if it is in a doctor's office, church setting, home, or anywhere.

Healing is from within and involves the mind, body, and spirit. Many people who are faced with serious illnesses are relying solely on a medical break through rather than healing through prayer. The author states that there are various types of prayers. Prayer will influence and motivate people to have hope and persevere during a time of illness or tough times in a person's life. There are some people who do not realize that health ministries are effective. Some people participate in prayer during regular worship services, but there are liturgical healing ministries that are offered in a public healing service. According to Leslie Weatherhead, prayer should be done in private for the self as well as corporately which is intercession for other people publicly. Although some people may die before physical or mental healing takes place, this gives us the opportunity to depend on God. God is in control of our lives.

Many people lose faith when their prayers are not answered according to their desires. Prayers are conducted in many ways. The author states that prayers are done in silence or meditation. This is a time for us to be still and listen to God's voice. This is a time to trust and be obedient to God's will and not that of our own will or desires.

Prayers are a form of communication to God and with God. It gives us the ability to seek guidance. According to the statement of John Fitzpatrick, we can pray for various things such as asking God for help with the cessation of smoking or tobacco use. It was then he realized that he had an attitude that consisted of rebellion against God.

Many people who are faced with addictions or cravings begin to realize that they can not go things alone without the help of others praying for them and God assisting them to make a transformation within their lives. According to William Temple, prayers will draw us closer to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we can not articulate our own needs.

According to the Evans (1999) there was an evangelist preacher named David Watson, he prayed for many sick people and even battled cancer himself. Although he died without physical healing, he feared no evil and had a confirmation that God was in control over his life. Healing should not be reduced to prayer and faith only, but other instruments such as medicines, physicians, and other persons are used in the healing process. Jesus used commands, touch, physical agents, faith, prayer, and other things for healing purposes. Evans (1999) suggests that there are a variety of ways that spirituality and religion can be used to help healing churches to provide resources in practical programs for health ministries to people in the community. Pastors, physicians, nurses, and other professionals can come together and establish educational groups within a church setting to accommodate individuals with information about certain issues. This type of group provides information on topics of interest such as: health related conditions, development of an exercise program for the elderly, issues of a divorce and family matters, and other areas of interests. The educational groups would help assist people in the community to make better health care decisions and participate in health prevention and wellness. According to the author, support and advocacy helps to heal the people in the community.

The church acts as a referral agent and provides a network to resources within the community to empower people to develop effective health ministries. The educational program provides assistance to families when a person is hospitalized, by participating in babysitting, cooking, and shopping, to ease burdens during difficult times. The educational program provides help to the elderly to prevent them from living in isolation. The healing ministry can help the elderly with challenges of retirement, old age, and preparations for funeral expenses. The program is designed to give respect and adds value to the elderly person's life. The author discussed the biblical principles of youth and aging as addressed in letters written by Apostle Paul as he aged during his time in prison.

Evans (1999) reveals that elderly people are added measure to churches and the community, for they have wisdom and experience in life. The elderly shows the younger generation how to develop character and patience during hardship or failing health, this produces hope while enduring life's challenges. Liturgical practices or rites of healing are witnessed when the elderly call upon the elders of the church to pray and lay hands upon them for their ailments. Also, sacraments of anointing one with oil or taking communion is evidenced and used in worship services to assist the elderly with healing and prayer.

The author presents other forms of sacraments that the laying on of hands on the sick is acknowledgement of power that one receives healing from Jesus Christ. The laying of hands on individuals expresses love by the use of touch. Touch is used as a natural way that is used to minister to others socially, physically, and psychologically. Various scriptures in the Holy Bible gave indications that laying hands on the sick is a healing process that was used by the great Prophets Elijah and Elisha and other disciples and apostles.

Laying on of hands is always linked to prayer. There is some controversy in the use of sacraments involving the Eucharist. Some people feel that only an ordained clergy or people with the gift of healing should practice the anointing and laying on of the hands should be recognized by a church and set apart in some way. But nonetheless, the power of the rites of healing of the Eucharist is connected with Christ; we are joined with one another.

Many people used the sacraments and rites of healing by practicing exorcism or casting out demons. It is very important to connect a person with a Christian companion to help assist the person to experience a deeper call and relationship with Christ. These types of sacraments must be done in a careful and orderly fashion to provide medical and psychological treatment combined with prayer to assist the person holistically.

Evans (1999) exposes various ways that churches can be used as a healing ministry to provide resources to people in the community. Churches are used for worship, this allows for the people's needs to be met spiritually, physically, and mentally. Prayer to God is one of the first things that are used in a church setting to help heal a church and community.

Granger Westberg is the pioneer of parish nursing. The role of a parish nurse can have a great impact within a church and community setting. According to Evans (1999) parish nurses feel that they have been called to their profession to use their gifts that God has given to them, by imparting faith within their healing profession. The holistic approach is enhanced by the Holy Spirit. A parish nurse can function in a variety of roles such as: an advocate, empowerment, health educator, trainer, personal health counselor, spiritual counselor, and provider of health services.

Parish nurses are registered professional nurses, Evans (1999). Some parish nurses may serve as a member of their church or may not be a member within the church. Parish nurses assist other churches within a health ministry. The Parish Nurse goes to other churches or communities to assist people with current health related issues of concerns. Some of the Parish nurses will teach others how to manage their high blood pressure, diabetes, and how to maintain independence during a role change within their lives as an elderly individual. Meals-onWheels and Alcoholic Anonymous are classified as health ministries even though they are not named as such. Worship services and pastoral counseling qualifies as health ministries. The author suggests that networking with various hospitals, churches, health departments, and community organizations should be done to deal with the needs of the community. It is important to work jointly with others to find resources for funding and formulating coalitions to support the purpose(s) of the health ministries. The author states that there should be plans made ahead of time with others to establish an effective health ministry such as: assistance with funding, expertise in various areas of the program, schedule regular committee meetings, and provide ongoing effective health ministries.

People are not forced into a particular denomination in order to receive a spiritual or physical healing. The concept of a healing church from within the community and churches can be an effective method to heal one another, as Christ healed people. We are in a time in life to where America needs a revival. We need more of a holistic approach. This will promote and maintain healthy lives.

#### References

Evans, A., R. (1999). The Healing Church: Practical Programs for Health Ministries. United Church Press, Cleveland Ohio.

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